CLAIMS

1. A fabric sheeting cover for an open-topped goods container of rectangular horizontal cross-section, comprising:

– a generally rectangular main area for covering the open top of the container;

– and a pair of generally triangular side flaps extending one from each of two opposed side edges of the main area, each side flap being movable with respect to the main area between a folded position where the flap overlies the main area and a deployed position where the side flap extends substantially at right angles to the main area;

– elastic members connecting the side flaps to the main area of the cover and arranged to pull the side flaps to their folded positions;

– pull-means for each side flap and arranged when tension is applied thereto to unfold the respective side flap against the bias provided by the elastic members thereby to move the side flap to its deployed position; and

– tie-down means for each flap, arranged to allow the securing thereof in its deployed position.

2. A sheeting cover as claimed in claim 1, wherein the elastic members comprise elastic cords which pull the side flaps to their folded positions and which are elastically stretched as the side flaps are moved to their deployed positions.

3. A sheeting cover as claimed in claim 2, wherein each side flap has a pair of elastic members associated therewith extending from a location at or adjacent the apex of the triangular flap to respective positions at or adjacent the end edges of the main area of the cover and part-way between the side edges.

4. A sheeting cover as claimed in claim 3, wherein the pair of elastic members associated with each side flap comprises a single continuous extensible elongate elastic cord the ends of which are secured to said respective positions at or adjacent the end edges of the main area and part-way between the side edges, the central region of the cord acting on the side flap at or adjacent the apex thereof.

5. A sheeting cover as claimed in claim 4, wherein the central region of the cord is connected to an eye attached to the side flap at or adjacent the apex thereof.

6. A sheeting cover as claimed in any of the preceding claims, wherein the pull-means comprises a flexible tension member attached to the side flap at or adjacent the apex thereof.

7. A sheeting cover as claimed in any of claims 1 to 5, wherein the pull-means comprises a flexible tension member running on a line extending between a first point at or adjacent the apex of the side flap and a second point adjacent the junction between the side flap and the main area of the cover.

8. A sheeting cover as claimed in claim 7, wherein said line comprise a wire rope the ends of which are attached to the cover at said first and second points.

9. A sheeting cover as claimed in claim 7 or claim 8, wherein the pull-means comprises a flexible tension member having a pulley at one end thereof, the pulley running on said line.

10. A sheeting cover as claimed in claim 9, wherein the pulley has a brake mechanism which automatically locks to said line to resist movement of the pulley along the line but which is released when tension is applied to the tension member.

11. A sheeting cover as claimed in any of claims 7 to 10, wherein a respective transverse slit is formed through the cover for each line, the line extending through the associated slit such that the tension member transfers from one side of the cover to the other on passing through said slit.

12. A sheeting cover as claimed in any of the preceding claims, wherein the tie-down means comprises a connector for a tension member, provided at or adjacent the apex of each flap.

13. A sheeting cover as claimed in claim 12, wherein the connector comprises a ring attached to the material of the cover.

14. A sheeting cover as claimed in any of the preceding claims, wherein the tie-down means includes, for each side flap, a flexible tension member connected to the apex of the side flap and which is securable to a lower part of the container or vehicle chassis.

15. A sheeting system as claimed in claim 14, wherein the flexible tension member is elastically extensible.

16. A sheeting system for an open-topped goods container of rectangular horizontal cross-section, comprising a sheeting cover as claimed in any of the preceding claims in combination with means to secure the cover in juxtaposition to a container so that the main area of the cover may be extended to overlie the open top of the container with said opposed edges running substantially parallel to two opposed edges of the open top.

17. A sheeting system as claimed in claim 16, wherein the securing means acts on the two opposed end edges of the main area of the cover.

18. A sheeting system as claimed in claim 17, wherein the securing means comprises, at or adjacent one end edge of the cover, a storage device for the cover into which the cover may be stowed by allowing the side flaps to move to their folded positions overlying the main area of the cover and then retracting the cover to the storage device.

19. A sheeting system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the storage device includes a roller on to which the cover is wound.

20. A sheeting system as claimed in claim 19, wherein the roller is provided with one of a spring-loaded mechanism, a power-driven mechanism or a manually-operated mechanism to cause rotation of the roller in the sense of winding the cover on to the roller.

21. A sheeting system as claimed in any of claims 18 to 20, wherein the securing means for the cover further includes a pair of arms pivoted at one of their ends and movable between a first position where the other ends of the arms are adjacent the storage device, and a second position where the other ends of the arms are at the other end of the container, the cover being connected to said other ends of the arms.

22. A sheeting system as claimed in claim 21, wherein a bar extends between said ends of the arms and the cover is attached to said bar.

23. A sheeting system as claimed in any of claims 16 to 22 in combination with an open-topped container on a vehicle, the securing means for the cover comprising a storage device mounted at the forward end of the container and a

pair of arms pivoted to the vehicle and arranged to extend the cover from the storage device over the open top of the container.

24. The combination of claim 23, wherein the container is removable from the truck, as required.

25. The combination of claim 23 or claim 24, wherein the cover is formed from one of a tarpaulin, a synthetic fabric or a netting material.